

# GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

## TRADITIONAL GAMES IN NATURE



**Project 101132271 – Traditgam**

“Promotion of interculturality, traditional values and transgenerational mobility through traditional games”

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# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Creating a Safe, Inclusive, and Enjoyable Environment through Traditional Games in Nature

Traditional games offer a powerful way to build community, celebrate cultural heritage, and support physical, emotional, and social development. To ensure these games remain accessible, meaningful, and sustainable, the following guiding principles should be applied:

## Ensuring Safety and Inclusivity

**Physical Safety:** Select suitable play areas that are free from hazards and appropriate for the age and abilities of the participants. Use soft or adaptive materials where needed, particularly indoors or in confined spaces. Active supervision helps prevent rough play and ensures safe participation.

**Emotional and Psychological Safety:** Foster a positive, respectful atmosphere where teasing, exclusion, and bullying are not tolerated. Encourage empathy, peer support, and positive reinforcement to help all participants feel welcome and valued.

**Promoting Inclusion:** Choose or adapt games that are simple to understand and do not require expensive or hard-to-find equipment. Games should be accessible to individuals of all physical, cognitive, and cultural backgrounds. Provide various roles and responsibilities within the games to ensure everyone can participate meaningfully.

**Empowerment and Leadership:** Encourage participants, especially children and youth, to take leadership roles, co-create new game variations, and suggest rule changes. This builds confidence, ownership, and a sense of belonging.

**Intergenerational Participation:** Involve people of all ages—including elders and cultural knowledge holders—to facilitate intergenerational learning and strengthen community ties.

## Respecting and Protecting Nature

**Environmental Responsibility:** Traditional games often take place in natural settings, offering an opportunity to foster environmental stewardship. Avoid damaging plants, wildlife, and ecosystems. Choose areas that can accommodate group activities without causing harm, and use environmentally friendly, reusable, or recycled materials whenever possible.

**Sustainability:** Use locally sourced, eco-conscious materials for game components to support both environmental preservation and cultural heritage. Always ensure that no waste is left behind after games are played.

**Nature Appreciation:** Encourage participants to be mindful of their surroundings. Staying on marked paths, using open play areas, and minimizing environmental impact helps instill a lifelong respect for nature.

## Encouraging Creativity and Adaptation

**Creative Engagement:** Keep traditional games dynamic by allowing for rule modifications, new roles, and creative storytelling elements. Integrating contemporary themes or technology—such as video tutorials, mobile apps, or augmented reality—can make games more engaging for modern audiences.

**Adaptability to Context:** Modify games to suit different group sizes, indoor or outdoor environments, urban or rural settings, and varying weather conditions. This flexibility ensures that traditional games can be enjoyed safely and meaningfully in a wide range of contexts.

**Cultural Sensitivity:** Adapt games to reflect and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of participants. Use inclusive language and symbols, and ensure that adaptations honor the spirit and values of the original traditions.

**By following these principles, traditional games in nature can become an inclusive, joyful, and environmentally responsible practice that connects generations, cultures, and communities.**

# TIPS FOR ORGANIZERS

Creating Engaging, Inclusive, and Adaptable Experiences with Traditional Games in Nature

Organizing traditional games in natural settings offers unique opportunities for education, connection, and fun. These tips will help facilitators create meaningful, inclusive, and adaptable experiences for diverse participants.

## How to Engage Participants

**Cultural Storytelling:** Begin with an engaging introduction that shares the history, folklore, or cultural traditions behind the game. Use storytelling, photos, videos, or music to spark interest and connect participants to the cultural roots of the activity.

**Lively Demonstrations:** Use energetic, fun demonstrations to show how the game works. Let participants see the joy and excitement firsthand, and consider offering a short trial round to break the ice.

**Diverse Roles and Involvement:** Offer a range of roles—leaders, helpers, observers, timekeepers, etc.—so participants with different interests and abilities can take part in meaningful ways.

**Youth Empowerment:** Encourage participants, especially young people, to co-create or lead games. This builds confidence, leadership, and a stronger connection to the activity.

**Intergenerational Engagement:** Invite elders, cultural practitioners, or community members to share stories or co-facilitate. Their presence enriches the experience and strengthens social ties across generations.

## Adapting Games for Different Environments

**Outdoor Settings:** Choose open, obstacle-free spaces such as grassy fields or forest clearings. Prioritize safety and minimize environmental impact by respecting local flora and fauna.

**Indoor Adaptations:** Use soft or lightweight materials and scale down movements to suit smaller indoor spaces. Adjust rules if needed to maintain fun and safety in limited

environments.

**Urban and Rural Flexibility:** In cities, opt for modular or portable equipment that fits urban parks, courtyards, or schoolyards. In rural areas, take advantage of natural landscapes, incorporating local features into the play.

**Weather-Responsive Planning:** Prepare alternate game versions or indoor backup plans for rain, heat, or cold. Adapt clothing recommendations and game intensity to seasonal conditions.

## Encouraging Teamwork and Inclusivity

**Collaborative Play:** Design games that promote teamwork, mutual support, and shared goals. Cooperation should be rewarded more than competition.

**Accessibility for All:** Offer simplified or modified versions of games so that participants of all ages and physical abilities can take part fully and comfortably.

**Positive Atmosphere:** Use encouragement, praise, and peer support to create a welcoming and friendly environment. Foster open communication and ensure everyone feels seen and valued.

## Leveraging Community Networks and Resources

**Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with local schools, cultural centers, museums, and NGOs to increase participation and gain logistical or educational support.

**Digital Outreach:** Use online platforms and social media to promote events, share tutorials or rules, and build a vibrant community around traditional games. Digital tools can also help document and preserve local game variations.

**With thoughtful planning, cultural sensitivity, and creative adaptation, traditional games in nature can become a transformative experience for individuals and communities alike.**

# FINAL THOUGHTS

## Keeping Traditional Games Alive Through Community, Creativity, and Connection

Traditional games are more than just playful activities—they are a living link to our cultural heritage, a tool for building community, and a meaningful way to connect across generations. As organizers, educators, and community members, we can play a vital role in ensuring these games continue to thrive in both local and global contexts.

## Encouraging Community Engagement and Cultural Sharing

**Celebrate Through Events:** Organize festivals, game days, and community gatherings where people can learn, play, and share traditional games. These events foster intergenerational exchange, cultural pride, and a sense of belonging.

**Tell the Stories:** Deepen participants' connection to the games by sharing stories about their origins, cultural significance, or personal memories. Storytelling brings context, emotion, and meaning to the play.

**Build an Online Presence:** Use social media and digital platforms to share photos, videos, tutorials, and personal adaptations of traditional games. This helps create a vibrant online community and encourages participation beyond local boundaries.

**Inspire Global Sharing:** Encourage readers and participants to explore traditional games from their own cultural backgrounds and share them with others. This promotes mutual respect, cultural exchange, and diversity through play.

## Inspiring and Engaging the Next Generation

**Add a Modern Twist:** Introduce elements such as music, technology, or pop culture themes to bridge tradition with contemporary interests.

**Gamify the Experience:** Use point systems, challenges, or friendly competitions to motivate participation and add excitement.

**Make It an Adventure:** Use storytelling and role-play to turn games into imaginative experiences. Legends, myths, or player-created narratives can enhance the fun.

**Support Creativity:** Encourage young people to adapt rules, invent new game versions, or combine elements from different traditions. This nurtures creativity while keeping the core spirit of traditional play alive.

**Use Digital Tools:** Create or promote video tutorials, mobile apps, and other digital resources to make games more accessible and easier to learn.

**Encourage Social Sharing:** Motivate youth to post their game experiences on social media using hashtags or video challenges. This makes the games visible, trendy, and shareable.

## **A Call to Action!!!**

By making traditional games accessible, fun, and meaningful, we can ensure they continue to inspire joy and connection across cultures and generations.

**Share your traditions. Celebrate your heritage. Inspire the next generation.  
Let the games continue—and evolve—with you.**

*"Traditions are our connection to the past, a cultural treasure that shapes our identity. By preserving and sharing traditional games, we not only honor the wisdom of our ancestors but also create an opportunity for new generations to experience community, joy, and creativity. Every time we play these games, we keep alive the spirit that has survived times and borders. May our games continue to tell stories and bring people together!"*

*"Traditional games are more than just play—they are a bridge between generations, a vibrant expression of our identity, and a tool for community resilience. By embracing these games, we honor our past, celebrate our present, and inspire future generations to connect, create, and thrive together. Let us cherish these treasures and pass them on with joy and respect."*

*"Traditional games are much more than just entertainment—they are a reflection of our history, culture, and collective experiences. By preserving and sharing these timeless games, we honor the wisdom, creativity, and values passed down through generations. These games connect us to our roots, foster unity, and remind us of the power of play to bring people together. Keeping these traditions alive ensures that future generations can experience the joy, lessons, and sense of belonging they provide. Let's promote and preserve them!"*



# TRADITIONAL GAMES

**POLAND, ITALY, SPAIN, LATVIA**

## POLAND

### **Pierścieniówka (Ringnetball)**

How to play:

- Two teams of 4 players each take positions on either side of the court.
- Three players stay behind a line 1.5 meters from the net to catch or pass the ball.
- The fourth player, the playmaker, stays within 1.5 meters closest to the net and only passes the ball—cannot throw through holes or block them.
- The game starts with a serve from the end line, hitting the ball above the net like volleyball.
- The opposing team catches the ball and attempts to throw it through one of the three holes in the net (middle hole diameter 70 cm; side holes 50 cm each).
- After each action, players rotate positions so everyone serves, plays maker, and throws through all holes.
- The match is played best of 3 or 5 sets up to 15, 21, or 25 points.

Materials needed:

- Ball, net with three holes cut out (one large middle, two smaller sides), court with marked lines.

Suggested age group:

- Children, teenagers, and adults; adaptable for all ages.

Cultural origins:

- Invented in 1930s Poland by PE teacher Włodzimierz Robakowski, inspired by fishermen throwing buoys through nets on the Mazurian Lakes.

## **Kapela**

How to play:

- One player is the Kapelamaster, standing in the middle with a "chapel" made of stacked stones and wearing a hat or cup on the head.
- Other players (around 8) form a circle, each holding a wooden ball.
- Players take turns throwing or rolling their ball to knock down the stone chapel.
- If successful, the player runs to retrieve the ball and return to their spot.
- Meanwhile, the Kapelamaster rebuilds the chapel and tries to hit the runner with the hat or cap before they return.
- If the runner is hit, they become the new Kapelamaster; if not, the Kapelamaster stays.

Materials needed:

- Small stones for chapel, hats or caps, wooden balls (formerly stones).

Suggested age group:

- Children and adults; suitable for all ages.

Cultural origins:

- Traditional Polish rural game from the Kociewie region; name derived from the Italian "capella" (chapel). Historically played by shepherds.

## **Palant**

How to play:

- Two teams of 7-15 players compete on a 20m x 50-60m field divided into "Heaven" and "Hell" zones.
- The attacking team ("Heaven") hits the ball with a wooden stick ("palant") and tries to run bases 1 to 4, then back to the "nest" (zapłot) to score points.
- The defending team ("Hell") tries to catch the ball and hit running players with it to eliminate them.
- Rules govern running zones and hitting: attacking players can't touch the ball, run out of "hell," or make illegal hits.
- Teams switch roles after 3 mistakes, too many players on base, or no attackers left.
- The game is played over 1 to 7 rounds; the team with the most points wins.

Materials needed:

- Wooden bat (~60cm), ball, field marked with bases and zones.

Suggested age group:

- Youth, teens, and adults; team sport for physical activity and strategy.

Cultural origins:

- Medieval Polish roots; linked historically to Italian "pallante" and possibly influenced American baseball. Popular in Silesia and Poland through the 20th century, with modern revival efforts.

## **Ringo**

How to play:

- Played one-on-one or in teams of 2-3.
- A rubber ring is thrown over a net, rope, or tape to the opponent's side.
- The opponent tries to catch and immediately throw the ring back over with one hand without moving while holding the ring.
- Points are scored when the opponent fails to catch or the ring lands on their side.
- Rings cannot go under the net or out of bounds; these result in points lost.
- Team versions may play with one or two rings flying simultaneously.

Materials needed:

- Rubber ring, net/rope/tape, playing field.

Suggested age group:

- Suitable for all ages; adaptable for informal and competitive play.

Cultural origins:

- Developed in 1950s Poland, connected to training by fencer Włodzimierz Strzyżewski; shown at 1968 Olympics in Mexico. Related to German ring tennis and English deck tennis.

## **Sztekiel**

How to play:

- Player uses a flat or rounded bat to hit a small wooden stick sharpened at both ends into the air.
- After the stick rises, the player strikes it again to send it as far as possible.
- Variations award points for distance over several rounds.
- The winner is the player who either accumulates most points or hits the stick the farthest.

Materials needed:

- Small wooden stick, flat or rounded bat.

Suggested age group:

- Traditionally played by village youth, suitable for children and teens.

Cultural origins:

- Part of an international family of games; popular in western Polish villages post-WWI and after WWII as a symbol of freedom and community revival.

# ITALY



## Strega Comanda Colore ("Witch Commands Color")

How to play:

- Choose one player to be the "witch."
- The witch shouts a color (e.g., "Witch commands color red!").
- All other players must quickly touch an object or clothing item of that color nearby.
- While players rush to find the color, the witch tries to catch one of them before they succeed.
- If the witch catches a player before they touch the color, that player becomes the new witch.
- If no one is caught, the witch continues for another round with a new color.

Materials needed:

- None (just a space with objects or players wearing various colors).

Suggested age group:

- 5 years and older.

Cultural origins:

- Traditional Italian playground game, a variant of classic tag involving colors.

### **Ruba Bandiera ("Capture the Flag")**

How to play:

- Divide players into two teams, facing each other, each member numbered.
- A flag bearer stands between the teams holding a handkerchief.
- The flag bearer calls out a number.
- The players with that number from each team race to grab the handkerchief and bring it back to their base.
- The first to bring the flag home earns a point for their team, unless the opponent tags them before they reach their base, which gives the point to the opposing team instead.
- The team with the most points at the end wins.

Materials needed:

- A handkerchief or small flag.

Suggested age group:

- 7 years and older.

Cultural origins:

- Unclear origins, but legend links it to shipwreck survivors using flags to signal for help.

### **Topolini Ciechi ("Blind Mice")**

How to play:

- Choose one player to be the "blind mouse."
- The blind mouse, often with eyes closed or blindfolded, tries to catch another player.
- When the blind mouse catches someone, that player becomes the new blind mouse.
- The game continues with players dodging and the blind mouse trying to tag others.

Materials needed:

A mat (optional) and a large playing area.

- Suggested age group: 4 years and older.

Cultural origins:

- Ancient chase game with roots possibly dating back to early civilizations; popular throughout Italian childhoods.

## **1 4 Cantoni ("The Four Cantons")**

How to play:

- At least five players participate. Four players each stand in one corner of a square playing area.
- One player stands in the middle.
- The players at the corners try to swap places by running to an unoccupied corner.
- The middle player tries to occupy any corner left open.
- Whoever fails to get a corner becomes the middle player for the next round.

Materials needed:

- Defined playing area with four corners (chalk, ropes, or indoor markers).

Suggested age group:

- 6 years and older.

Cultural origins:

- Traditional Italian children's game, originally called "toccapoma," with roots in outdoor play.

## **Campana ("The Bell" / Hopscotch)**

How to play:

- Draw 10 numbered boxes on the ground using chalk.
- Players take turns throwing a small pebble into the first box.
- If the pebble lands outside the box, the turn ends.
- If it lands correctly, the player hops through the boxes on one foot (or both feet for horizontal boxes), skipping the box with the pebble.

- Players must hop all the way to the last box and back without stepping on lines or falling.
- If successful, they throw the pebble into the next box on their next turn.
- The winner is the first to complete all boxes without mistakes.

Materials needed:

- Chalk to draw the grid and a small pebble.

Suggested age group:

- 4 years and older.

Cultural origins:

- Ancient Roman origins (known as Clàudus), widely played across the world with many local variations.



# SPAIN



## A Chave

Short description:

- Players throw metal discs called pellos to knock down a “key” (a tongue, blades, or fork-shaped piece) to score points. The disc must be thrown directly without bouncing first. Different regions use different key types and rules.

Short history and traditions:

- This traditional game varies by province (A Coruña, Santiago, Orense, Lugo, Ferrol) with distinct types of keys and pellos (metal discs). It’s a centuries-old game involving precision throwing.

Physical abilities developed:

- Aiming, spatio-temporal perception, throwing skills.

## **Birilé**

Short description:

- Two teams face off in a rectangular field divided in half with “cemetery” zones. Players throw a ball to hit opponents; those hit go to the cemetery. Players in the cemetery try to get back in by avoiding throws. The team eliminating all opponents first wins.

Short history and traditions:

- Believed to have French origins from the word “brulé.” The game is popular in some Spanish regions and combines dodgeball and tag elements.

Physical abilities developed:

- Agility, speed, coordination, ability.

## **A Ra**

Short description:

- Players throw small iron disks (pellos) at holes on a wooden table featuring a “ra” figure and wickets, aiming to score points by landing pellos in target holes. Can be played solo, in pairs, or teams.

Short history and traditions:

- Dating back to ancient times (Egyptians, Greeks, Romans), this game has been popular on the Iberian Peninsula for centuries, with organized competitions held today, especially in Asturias.

Physical abilities developed:

- Aiming, spatio-temporal perception, throwing accuracy.

## **La Billarda**

Short description:

- Players use a wooden stick (billarda) to hit another stick placed on the ground so it flies into the air; they then hit it again to send it toward a pole to score points. Missing or throwing out of bounds means a retry.

Short history and traditions:

- Played since the Middle Ages across Galicia, Asturias, Canary Islands, Basque Country, and even in South Asia, it's sometimes called "Galician baseball" due to similarity with baseball.

Physical abilities developed:

- Aiming, eye-hand coordination, strength, dexterity.

## **Mariola**

Short description:

- A hopscotch-like game where players throw a small stone ("china") onto numbered squares, hopping on one foot or both to avoid stepping on boundary lines or the stone. The game follows a sequence tied to progressing through "worlds."

Short history and traditions:

- Believed to be inspired by Dante's Divine Comedy, symbolizing a journey from Earth to Heaven, this Renaissance-era game challenges balance and agility.

Physical abilities developed:

- Vision-motor coordination, agility, balance, jumping skills.

# LATVIA



## Cucumbers (Gurķi)

How to play:

- Players (4-15) stand in a tight circle; one player (the leader) is in the middle with a ball.
- The leader throws the ball high and calls a player's name. That player tries to catch the ball while others run away.
- If caught, the catcher throws the ball up and calls another name, repeating the process. If the ball hits the ground, the turn ends.
- When a player catches the ball, they shout "Stop!" and everyone freezes. The player with the ball chooses another player and the number of steps to approach them.
- The player then tries to hit the chosen player with the ball within those steps. If successful, the "cucumber" belongs to the target; if missed or caught, it belongs to the thrower.

Materials needed:

- One ball.

Suggested age group:

- 6 years and above.

Cultural origins:

- Popular throughout Latvia since the 1950s–60s when outdoor play was common before digital entertainment.

Physical abilities developed:

- Throwing, catching, running, walking, jumping, cooperation skills.

### **12 Small Sticks (12 kociņi)**

How to play:

- A leader is chosen; 12 sticks are placed on a board resembling a catapult or swing.
- The leader collects sticks and places them back while others hide.
- Players try to sneak to the sticks and knock them into the air again without being seen.
- If the leader spots a player running to the sticks, they call the player's name and touch the board, eliminating them.
- The game continues until all players are found.

Materials needed:

- 12 sticks, a board or platform.

Suggested age group:

- 6 years and above.

Cultural origins:

- Traditional Latvian outdoor game from the mid-20th century.

Physical abilities developed:

- Running, hiding, cooperation, agility.

### **The Slower You Go, The Further You Will Go (Lēnāk brauksi, tālāk tiks)**

How to play:

- Players stand behind an imaginary line; the leader stands about 20 meters away with their back turned.
- The leader calls out "Slow down, you'll get further" and quickly turns to face the players.
- When the leader turns, players must freeze; anyone caught moving must return behind the line.
- Players try to reach and touch the leader first. The one who succeeds takes the leader's place, and the game restarts.

Materials needed:

None.

Suggested age group: 5 years and above.

Cultural origins: Latvian traditional children's game from the 1950s-60s promoting outdoor activity.

Physical abilities developed: Movement control, obstacle overcoming, cooperation.

### **Pinecone Golf (Čiekuru golfs)**

How to play:

- Participants line up; buckets or targets are placed about 10 meters away.
- Using a wooden stick or branch, players push a large pinecone toward the bucket.
- Players take turns; the one who completes the task fastest wins.

Materials needed:

- Pinecones, wooden sticks or branches, buckets or target containers.

Suggested age group:

- 6 years and above.

Cultural origins:

- Traditional Latvian outdoor game from mid-20th century.

Physical abilities developed:

- Coordination, aiming, cooperative play, movement control.

### **Doggies (Sunīši)**

- How to play:
- Two leaders stand facing each other about 5-10 meters apart.
- One to three “doggies” stand between them.
- The leaders throw a soft ball or object to each other.
- If a doggie catches the ball, roles switch: the doggie becomes a leader, and the caught leader becomes a doggie.

Materials needed:

- Soft ball or throwable object.

Suggested age group:

- 5 years and above.

Cultural origins:

- Popular Latvian outdoor game since the 1950s-60s.

Physical abilities developed:

- Jumping, squatting, lunging, running, throwing, catching, cooperation.